

346.48 Vehicles to stop for school buses displaying flashing lights. (1) The operator of a vehicle which

approaches from the front or rear any school bus which has stopped on a street or highway when the bus is equipped according to s. 347.25 (2) and when it is displaying flashing red warning lights, shall stop the vehicle not less than 20 feet from the bus and shall remain stopped until the bus resumes motion or the operator extinguishes the flashing red warning lights. The operator of any school bus which approaches from the front or rear any school bus which has stopped and is displaying flashing red warning lights shall display its flashing red lights while stopped. This subsection does not apply to operators of vehicles proceeding in the opposite direction on a divided highway.

(2) (a) Except as provided in par. (b) the operator of a school bus equipped with flashing red warning lights as specified in s. 347.25 (2) shall actuate such lights at least 100 feet before stopping to load or unload pupils or other authorized passengers, and shall not extinguish such lights until loading or unloading is completed and persons who must cross the highway are safely across.

Where the curb and sidewalk are laid on one side of the road only, the operator shall use the flashing red warning lights when loading or unloading passengers from either side.

(b) School bus operators shall not use the flashing red warning lights in:

1. Special school bus loading areas where the bus is entirely off the traveled portion of the highway.
2. Residence or business districts when pupils or other authorized passengers are to be loaded or unloaded where a sidewalk and curb are laid on both sides of the road, unless required otherwise by municipal ordinance enacted under s. 349.21 (1).

(bm) Except as provided in par. (b) 2. or unless prohibited by municipal ordinance enacted under s. 349.21 (2), a school bus operator shall use the flashing red warning lights as provided in par. (a) in a zone designated by "school" warning signs as provided in s. 118.08 (1) in which a street or highway borders the grounds of a school when pupils or other authorized passengers are loaded or unloaded directly from or onto the school grounds or that portion of the right-of-way between the roadway and the school grounds.

(c) When a school bus is being used on a highway for purposes other than those specified in s. 340.01 (56) (a) and (am), the flashing red warning lights shall not be used, and all markings on the front and rear of the bus indicating it is a school bus shall be removed or completely concealed; except that any time a motor vehicle is equipped as provided under ss. 347.25 (2) and 347.44 and is transporting children for any purpose, the school bus markings may remain unconcealed and the flashing red signals may be used as provided in this section and when so used, sub. (1) applies to operators of other motor vehicles.

(3) If the operator of a motor vehicle overtakes a school bus which is stopped and is loading or unloading pupils or other authorized passengers at an intersection on the right side of a roadway in a business or residence district in which the display of the flashing red warning lights on the school bus is not permitted, the operator shall pass at a safe distance to the left of the school bus and shall not turn to the right in front of the school bus at that intersection.

History: 1973 c. 93; 1975 c. 18, 120, 429; 1985 a. 287, 301; 1987 a. 125.

Cross-reference: See s. 349.21, which authorizes towns, cities, villages, and counties to provide for the use of flashing red lights by school buses in certain residential or business districts.

346.485 Owner's liability for vehicle illegally passing school bus. (1) Subject to s. 346.01 (2), the owner of a vehicle

involved in a violation of s. 346.48 (1) shall be liable for the violation as provided in this section.

(2) The operator of a school bus who observes a violation of s. 346.48 (1) may prepare a written report indicating that a violation has occurred. If possible, the report shall contain the following information:

- (a) The time and the approximate location at which the violation occurred.
- (b) The license number and color of the vehicle involved in the violation.
- (c) Identification of the vehicle as an automobile, motor truck, motor bus, motorcycle or other type of vehicle.

(3) Within 24 hours after observing the violation, the school bus operator may deliver the report to a traffic officer of the county or municipality in which the violation occurred. A report which does not contain all the information in sub. (2) shall nevertheless be delivered and shall be maintained by the county or municipality for statistical purposes.

(4) (a) Within 48 hours after receiving a report containing all the information in sub. (2), the traffic officer may prepare a uniform traffic citation under s. 345.11 and may personally serve it upon the owner of the vehicle.

(b) If with reasonable diligence the owner cannot be served under par. (a), service may be made by leaving a copy of the citation at the owner's usual place of abode within this state in the presence of a competent member of the family at least 14 years of age, who shall be informed of the contents thereof.

(c) If with reasonable diligence the owner cannot be served under par. (a) or (b) or if the owner lives outside of the jurisdiction of the issuing authority, service may be made by certified mail addressed to the owner's last-known address.

(5) (a) Except as provided in par. (b), it shall be no defense to a violation of this section that the owner was not operating the vehicle at the time of the violation.

(b) The following are defenses to a violation of this section:

1. That a report that the vehicle was stolen was given to a traffic officer before the violation occurred or within a reasonable time after the violation occurred.

1m. If the owner of the vehicle provides a traffic officer with the name and address of the person operating the vehicle at the time of the violation and the person so named admits operating the vehicle at the time of the violation, then the person operating the vehicle and not the owner shall be charged under this section.

2. If the vehicle is owned by a lessor of vehicles and at the time of the violation the vehicle was in the possession of a lessee, and the lessor provides a traffic officer with the information required under s. 343.46 (3), then the lessee and not the lessor shall be charged under this section.

3. If the vehicle is owned by a dealer as defined in s. 340.01 (11) (intro.) but including the persons specified in s. 340.01 (11) (a) to (d), and at the time of the violation the vehicle was being operated by any person on a trial run, and if the dealer provides a traffic officer with the name, address and operator's license number

of the person operating the vehicle, then the person operating the vehicle, and not the dealer, shall be charged under this section.

347.44 Painting requirements for school buses; restrictions as to painting of other vehicles. (1) All school buses shall be painted as follows:

(a) With the exception of trim, the body, including hood, fenders, cowl and roof shall be painted a uniform color, national school bus glossy yellow, according to national institute of standards and technology specifications;

(b) The body trim, if used, shall be black; and

(c) The words, "SCHOOL BUS", in black letters at least 8 inches high shall appear on both the front and rear of the upper body area or on a sign attached thereto.

(2) A motor vehicle described in s. 340.01 (56) (b) may, but need not, comply with sub. (1). If the motor vehicle complies with sub. (1), the vehicle shall comply with other regulations relating to school buses prescribed by the department by rule.

(3) No person may paint or in any way designate a motor vehicle in the manner described in sub. (1) except as expressly authorized by this section.

(4) When a motor vehicle in compliance with sub. (1), s. 347.25 (2), and the rules of the department relating to school bus equipment is no longer operated as a school bus, the registration of the motor vehicle for another purpose may not be permitted until the owner:

(a) Physically removes the signs identifying the vehicle as a school bus, the lights required by s. 347.25 (2) and such other equipment as the department may specify by rule; and

(b) Repaints the entire vehicle to a color other than national school bus glossy yellow or any color commonly referred to as yellow.

History: 1975 c. 121, 199, 224, 429; 1977 c. 29 s. 1654 (7) (e); 1977 c. 228; 1979 c. 221; 1983 a. 175; 1985 a. 287; 1989 a. 165.

347.445 Crossing gates for school buses. No person may operate a school bus that is painted as provided in s. 347.44 unless it is equipped with a retractable crossing gate on the front of the bus that, when in use, prevents children from crossing in front of the school bus in such proximity that they are not visible to the operator of the school bus from the operator's seat. The secretary shall prescribe rules for the specifications, installation, and operation of crossing gates required under this section.

History: 2001 a. 58.